

## Virginia Local Section PR Makeover Report, provided by the ACS Committee on Public Relations and Communications (CPRC)

Thank you for participating in the ACS CPRC PR Makeover Program! Your survey and supporting documents have been reviewed. CPRC appreciates the great work done by your section on publicity. The CPRC Makeover working group reviews many local sections and yours is among the most active with a well-organized plan directed by a cadre of people who are vested in success and driven to maintain the excellence of the Section. The following is a summary of recommendations to further the Section's publicity efforts.

### Suggestion Highlights

- Streamline the presentation and digestibility of information on the website's homepage. A text heavy page can be difficult to navigate. Here are three suggested web sites for you to look at to get an idea of using tabs: The ACS Division of Organic Chemistry <https://www.organicdivision.org/>; St. Louis Local Section <http://www.stlacs.org/> and Georgia Local Section <https://acsga.org/>.
- Streamline the newsletter to improve readability.
- Revisit your strategic plan and initiate defined tasks.
- Promote more partnerships with local industry using the award system already in place in addition to meeting location.
- Highlight your Project SEED initiatives and results.
- Include Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram links on your web pages. The social media icons can appear right up front on the home page and link to your social media.

### Situation Summary

The Virginia Local Section covers an area of Virginia that includes 15 universities and colleges. The section is very active with high involvement from YCC and WCC. The Section provides a mentoring program for undergraduate and graduate students and a "buddy" system for new members.

### General Comments about Publicity

For either internal or external publicity, it is useful to strategize in terms of the target audience, the message(s) to be used, and the communication media. The communication tactics can then be developed from the strategies. Moreover, it is useful occasionally to launch specific publicity campaigns to accomplish targeted publicity goals (e.g., targeting potential members for recruitment, gaining more visibility for the regional meeting, or attracting non-ACS entities for potential collaboration)

### Local Section Meetings and Activities

The Strategic Plan developed in 2020 has well-defined goals and strategies to accomplish them. Review this plan as it is still germane and actionable. It is important to continue to work to accomplish what you have laid out as you move forward.

The Virginia section covers a large area with meeting sites held at different college and universities. To increase participation, hybrid meetings should be offered whenever possible. Virtual attendance was tried during the pandemic and was successful.

Most of the activities of the section involves academic institutions. It is recommended that the Section try to include business and industries into their programming, perhaps by having a business host a Section meeting. If you increase the value of ACS membership to industry people, you will increase your membership, your pool of speakers for technical talks, and your volunteer base. Your active mentoring program will also benefit.

To provide members with opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and professional development, topical groups specific to chemistry disciplines (organic, analytical, chemistry education etc.) can be formed. These discussion groups can meet regularly via zoom. Provide links to each topical group that is active in the section on your website. This may help filter potential members to a group they can engage in the best. Each group would then have its information posted once you click on the group name.

Science Cafes are a good way to bring members together in a social setting. The ACS Committee on Local Section Activities (LSAC) provides \$500 mini-grants to local sections who wish to host 2022 Science Cafes. Applications will open on September 1, 2022. Deadline for submissions is October 15, 2022. For more information, email [lsac@acs.org](mailto:lsac@acs.org).

### **YCC**

You are to be commended on the significant presence of the YCC in your Section. The YouTube channel they produce is an excellent idea that promotes the Section and the practice of chemistry. The group should be encouraged to produce more videos. It might be helpful to draw YCC members into leadership roles on the executive committee. They are the next generation Section Leaders and have a good handle on electronic communications and social media.

### **Website**

The Section has a very comprehensive website that is well-organized and easy to navigate. Information about past meetings and newsletters is archived and easily accessible. Pictures are included that make the site more interesting but some of the pages are very text dense. Consider succinct text or summaries that distill the core information of the post into a format that is easily and rapidly digestible (i.e., bulleted list or summary sentence with bold/italics to call out key phrases).

Use your Facebook and social media accounts to advertise the website and what is on it to attract as much traffic as possible. More hits translate to more potential members and more volunteers which will make your programs sustainable.

The Section has a great program of acknowledging excellence in teaching. When teachers participate in Section events, make sure to collect their contact information and send occasional emails that will drive them to your website. On the website, you have posted ACS links to educational materials, which are helpful to teachers, but they are buried in a long laundry list of all ACS resources. Email blasts to teachers could highlight what is available to them on your website so they are aware of this excellent resource. Similarly, periodically send an activity or article that would be of interest to teachers or a link to a *Reactions* video. *Reactions*, an ACS produced series of videos on YouTube, feature the chemistry of real life and pop culture. These short videos are informative and most of all fun. They are popular with students of all ages. Information about AACT could be included in the resource list. Membership in this group provides valuable resources and information for local chemistry teachers. These things will keep teachers coming back to your website.

Employment opportunities are helpful to your members on this tab. With the ACS links you have, consider also posting job opportunities from schools and industry in the area that you serve.

### **Social Media**

The initial survey provided to CPRC indicates that the Section uses Facebook and LinkedIn, but the annual report shows an Instagram account with 166 followers. The Instagram account is owned and maintained by the section's YCC. There needs to be better communication between committees so the maximum benefit for the section can be realized through social media.

The section has a Facebook page, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Consider establishing a Twitter account as an additional way to reach members. The very active YCC group can be very helpful in maintaining and posting.

### **Suggestions**

- Targeted publicity and leveraging social media can be used to reach more potential volunteers.
- Engage YCC members to increase their use of social media.
- Use YCC members to "tutor" other members in social media
- Name person(s) to be multiple admins (at least 2) for Facebook and LinkedIn Group page
- Create a monthly schedule for social media updates
- Consider linking accounts so posting can be done from one platform or use a third-party provider like Hootsuite to manage multiple accounts from a single console
- Ask Section Exec Committee members to post meetings, special events, etc. on their social media for additional exposure.
- Consider having the section hashtag and the Twitter handle be the same. Example, #ACSVA is the hashtag and @ACSVA is the Twitter account.
- Create a written list of what "The Section" will post on social media AND what "The Section" will not post on social media. This includes original content as well as shared content.

### **Facebook**

There are only 89 followers on the Section's page. This seems low for a section of this size. There are regular posts, but mostly about outreach events. The page is populated with engaging pictures from these outreach events and many posts are cleverly written. But there are very few "likes" and "shares" on any post. This would indicate that people are not being driven to the Facebook page and are not paying attention to the posts. Bring attention to your Facebook page on your website by placing the Facebook link near the top of the home page. Post all current events and the most up-to-date information about events and meetings on your Facebook page as well as your website.

### **Instagram**

There are 166 followers on the YCC Instagram account. Encourage YCC to post regularly. Ask them to post Section events and meetings as well as their own material.

### **Communication to Members**

- Use email "newsflashes" to communicate last minute information, opportunities, last-minute changes to membership/attendees, etc.

- Have small, targeted lists of members for specific messages. These can be sorted and stored in your email database such as Constant Contact.
- Use an event registration platform for public events. This can be done in Constant Contact or Eventbrite. These can also be used for FREE events.

### **Coordinating Volunteers**

Sign Up Genius <http://www.signupgenius.com>

This is a free, easy-to-customize platform for volunteer signup. Slots can be swapped, and the program generates automated reminders to volunteers. This is an essential tool for coordinating outreach events and hosting national/regional meetings. Links to the volunteer sign-up form can be posted to social media or emailed to databases.

### **Additional Resources**

#### **ACS PR Handbook**

Everything you wanted to know about Public Relations is in the ACS handbook. Find it here:

<https://www.acs.org/content/dam/acsorg/volunteer/public-relations-guidebook.pdf>

#### **Free Workshops**

Social media 101 Training Workshops are held periodically at ACS National meetings. Check the meeting schedule and consider asking interested section members or Publicity Committee members to attend.

#### **ACS Leadership Courses**

There are several communication courses. The most pertinent is the course on “Developing Communication Strategies.” A related course is “Engaging Colleagues in Dialogue.”

#### **Webinars**

Watch for social media training webinars offered from ACS Webinars.